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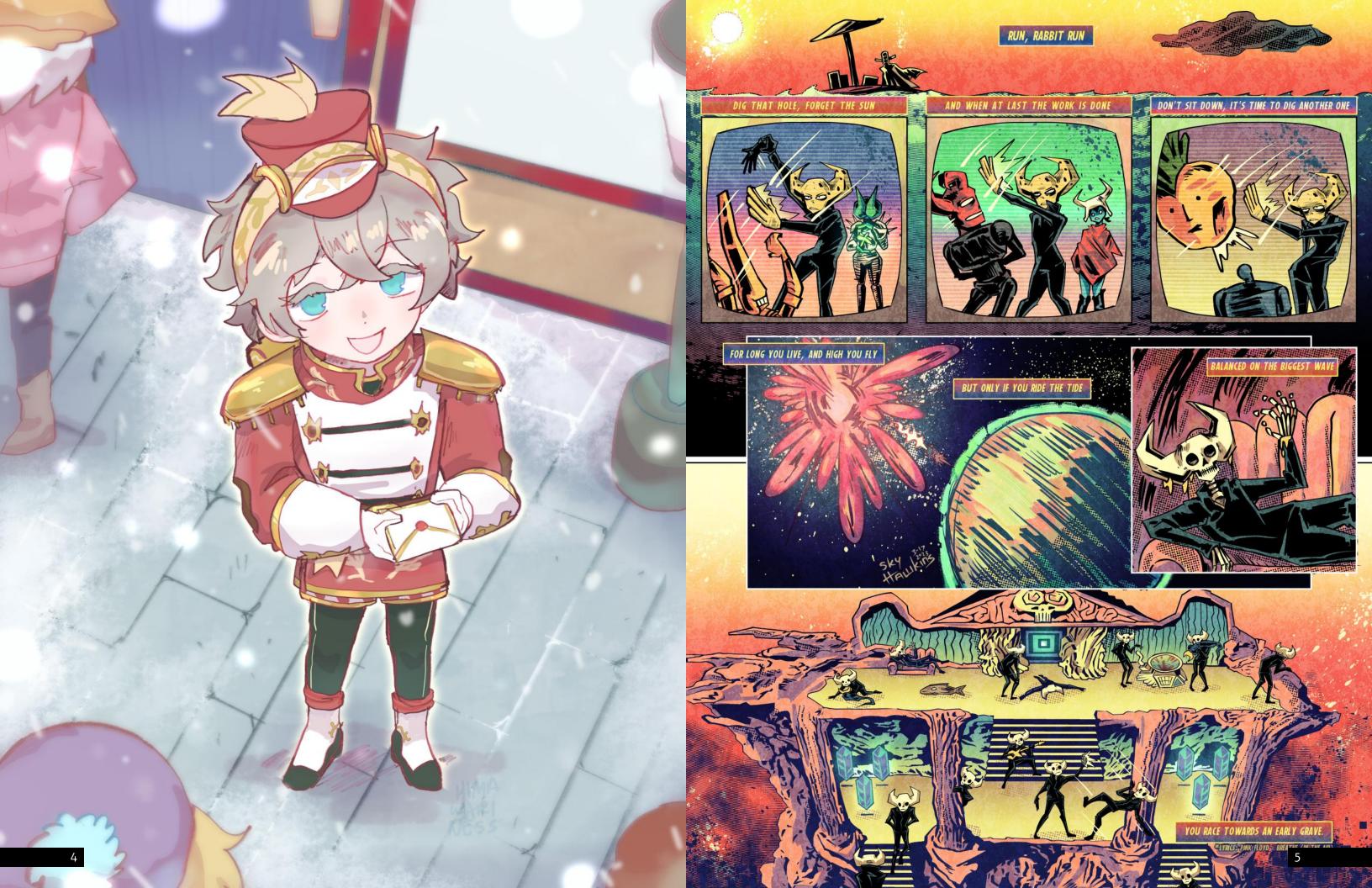
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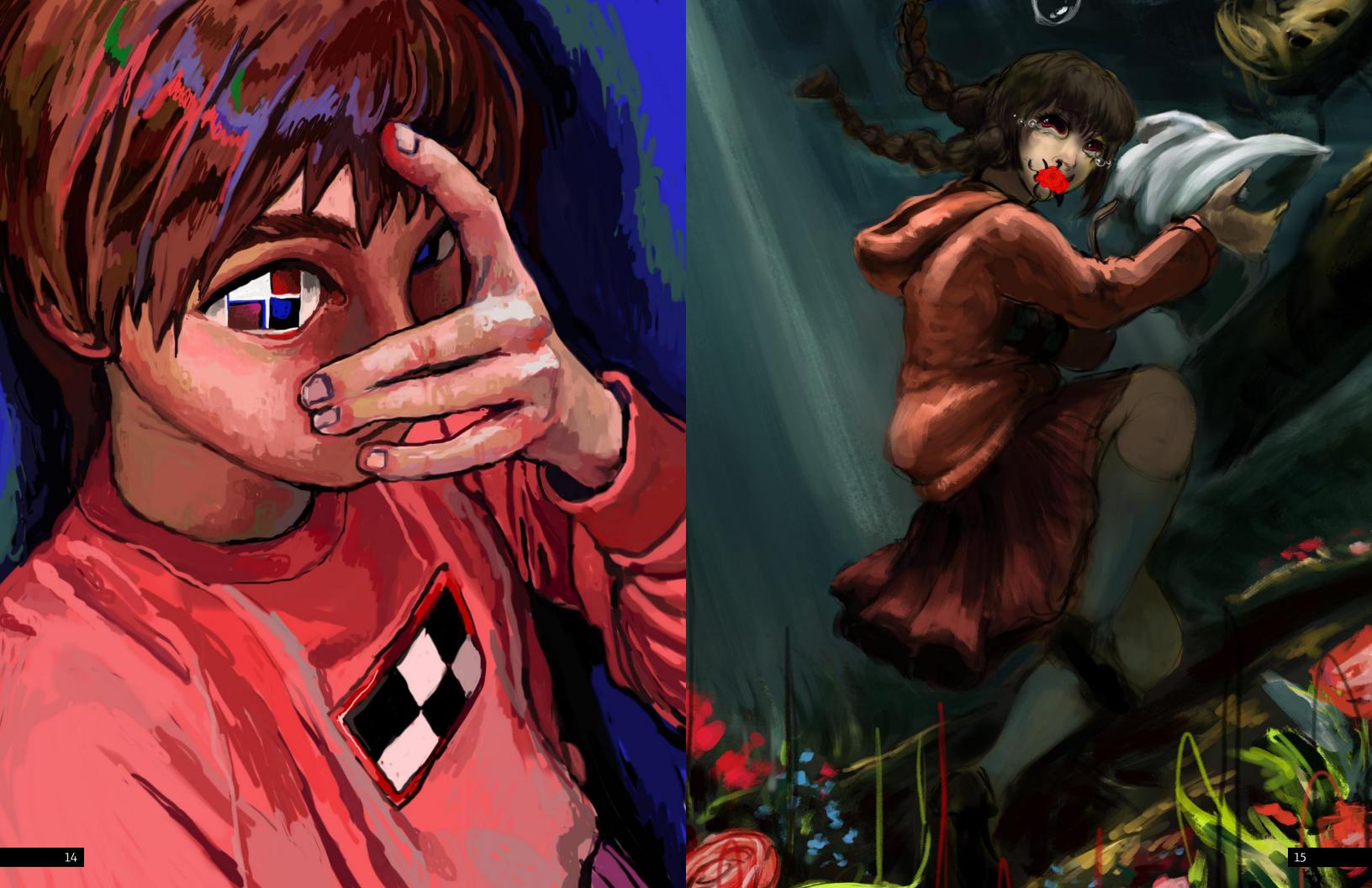


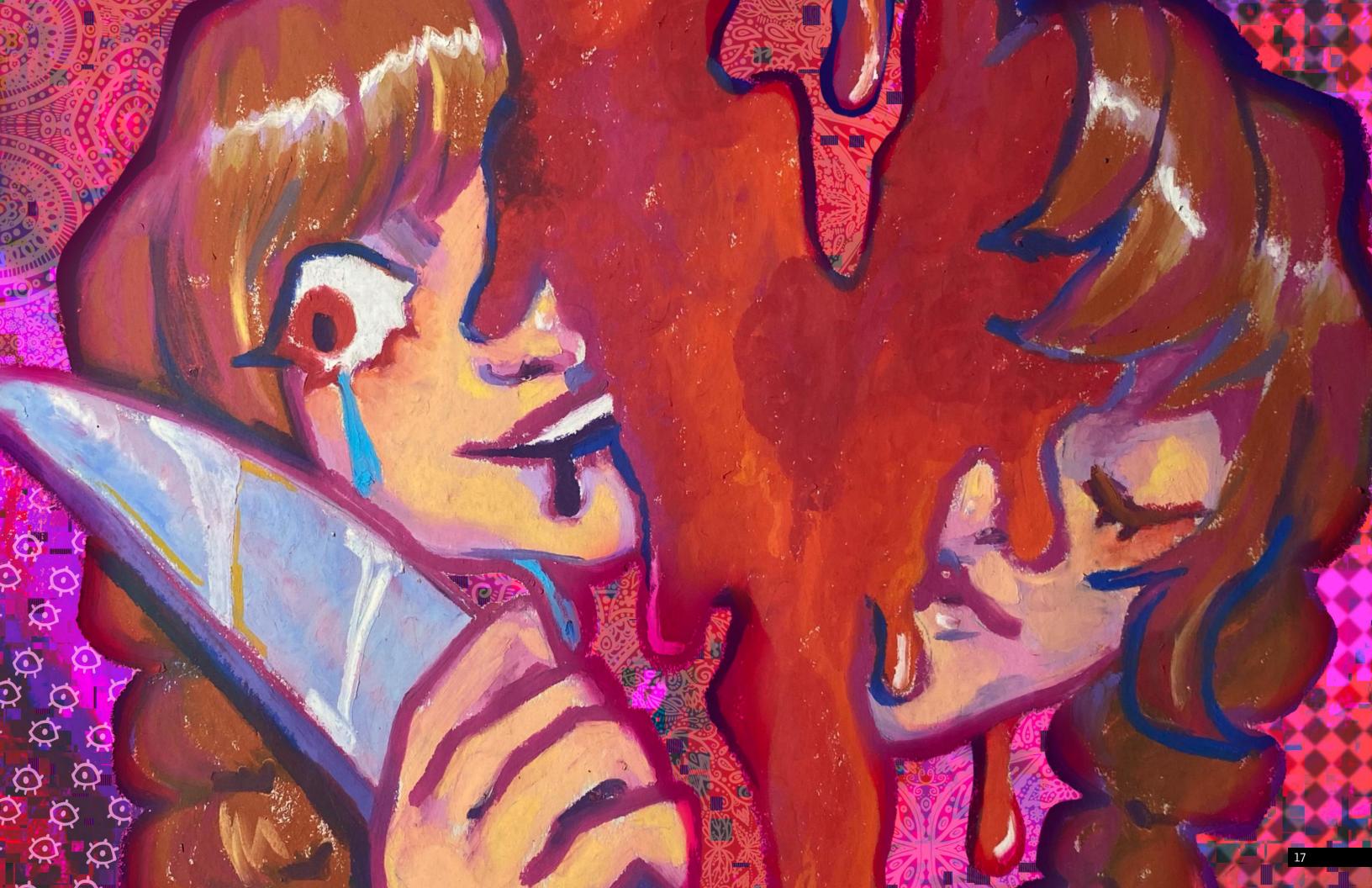












\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* Aveyond \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

## The Goddess with the Bad Hip

by Iztopher

In the temple that was the heart of Aveyond, there lived a woman with no name. She teemed with introductions anyways. She was called anything from an old woman with a bad hip to the Goddess, depending on what the situation called for.

Usually, though, she was the Oracle.

It was the truest of her titles. There was much more to her than her wrinkled smile and aching side, but her history was shorter and her abilities weaker than often assumed. The world of Aia was not born of her, although she was the one to raise it. No matter how much she, or anyone, would like her to, the Oracle could not simply snap her fingers and make things happen. She could only understand what must happen, where the strings of fate were supposed to come together, and do her best to thread them.

"Take the Sword of Shadows. It is your destiny."

Sometimes, Aia risked fraying into a hundred half-endings. In another life, the Oracle feared the lavender-braided sword singer had set down her blade and took the hand of the very evil she was meant to destroy. But the Oracle did not have to contend with that life; at least not this version of her, not today. She was greeted instead by the ending where the sword singer and sun priest joined hands only after the hard-won battle. She watched from afar as they ushered in a new era of prosperity.

As Thais was rebuilt stronger than ever before, Aveyond itself began to falter, as if to prove it had outgrown its protector. The Oracle woke each day to a temple closing in on itself, the surrounding landscape shrinking inch by inch, until one morning she passed through the threshold to find herself in the lilac fog of the mists.

In the world blossoming around her, few knew of the Oracle of Aveyond or the druids she once guided. Instead, they came to worship a singular Goddess. Humble towns and hungry empires alike raised statues of a tall, lithe young woman. She supposed she may once have been that figure, but she suspected not. She could not remember a time when her back didn't hunch with age, when she couldn't look through her skin to see blue, bulging veins.

And so, to the two half-frozen elflings, the old woman with the bad hip downplayed the importance of the boy's task, the impossibility of the girl's. Iya, her name was, had already had her hope stolen away - the last thing she needed was to be told her journey was all but futile.

"Iya Tiki, I... owe you an apology."

A good mother should hope her children can live without her one day. A goddess, perhaps, owed her people the same. Iya needed to stitch herself back together - and to guide her to that opportunity, the Oracle needed to give her the tools and faith that she could.

Iya regained her spirit and returned home, Ean by her side. The Snow Queen's heart thawed. And Aveyond, too, found its strength and warmth once more as Aia believed in it again.

Stories surged, and with it, the grass outside of the temple grew, though softer and more controlled than before. What was once a wild, dangerous landscape, home to prowling griffins and stinging bees, became a carefully curated garden inhabited by harmless bunnies and helpful priestesses.

The world was too far along in its stitching to veer off track; more structured, more certain now. The next time a group of travelers came seeking aid, the Oracle saw each of their threads clean and clear.

"Te'ijal, is that you? It's been years."

"Not enough, unfortunately. I have bad news."

It was rare that the Oracle was gifted familiar faces, but the beaming vampire and the stern-faced paladin before her now echoed back three centuries. This time, the new girl they were with, as in over her head as the last, was not destined to save the world.

She was doomed to destroy it.

And this time, unlike the famed Rhen Pendragon, there was no predestined hero to save the day. There was only one possible ending to Mel Darkthrop's story. The Oracle knew what must happen.

And so the world fell - but only for a moment.

The Oracle saw to it that Mel took the Staff of Destiny into her hands, and with it, a demon into her heart. But she also saw to it that Mel's friends - not destined, but no less determined - knew to save her. And as swiftly as the world was captured, it was broken free, and the Darkthrop Prophecy ended with a tidy knot.

That was the Oracle's duty. She found that the world required it less and less of her every century. Its patterns were already in place; villains vied for power and heroes saw them vanquished without prophecy to lead them. Aia was outgrowing its goddess. She could set aside responsibility and, for the first time, take up recreation.

Boyle the Horrible was not destined for anything - certainly not his aspirations of world domination. But the Oracle would have liked to see him follow in his ancestors' footsteps and save the world.

"You put the world in danger."

"Maybe I did, maybe I didn't..."

The Oracle knew the world well enough to calculate her risks. She had learned to trust its people enough to rise to the challenge, and she knew that sometimes goodness needed to be nurtured. It wouldn't hurt to nudge a villain towards redemption and let the pieces fall. Boyle and his friends did not disappoint.

At the end of the day, or year, or century, the Oracle loved Aia too much to leave it to its own devices. Simply setting aside needle and thread did not always still the hands. So the goddess with the bad hip stayed alert and ready for when it needed her, and found opportunities to meddle when it didn't.











#### 

by RainybyDay

A beautiful white rose, a blank girl.

The white rose is wandering about, watching, and eyes darting in every direction. While her expression sets to a default slate of blank apathy in the darkness, her eyes tell a different story through her emotions. She is scared and weary of the halls that suddenly evolve into silence.

Then the white rose fell into the deep blue, and her red eyes see no more.

The red of her eyes will match nicely with her rose. A dying flower slowly succumbed to its weakness until the girl gently placed it in a sanctuary.

The silence is loud, an echo that only she can hear. Hands reaching from within the walls, cracks of vacant space, and moving headless mannequins. Things that should not be real, that was once pure imagination, have excelled beyond that.

She is scared, yet she moves on. The hands that grabbed her are pulled away, the guillotine dropping from above evaded by trembling legs, and the rapid beating of her heart echoes in her ears as she runs from the crawling lady in red.

The oh-so-lonely red rose wanders with too small hands and glassy red eyes that do not wavy or water. She must never falter, for she is a strong and resilient rose.

However, not everything should be done alone. Not one child should feel the emptiness of companionship.

A red rose, passionate for the ones she loves so deeply.

+

A stiff white rose, an insecure man.

The white rose is alone, but he is kind. Kindness can only take you so far before it leaves you with nothing when you've given so much. Thus, it was only apparent when the white rose turned blue and fell alone into another gallery of horrors and doubts.

The man could only hold on for so long before his life was taken from his hands and ripped to shreds. Although fearfully running towards safety, he had not realized that his safety was now at the hands of a painting in blue.

Pain and agony, despair and dreed, will he die like this? Alone and abandoned?

Perhaps not, for the girl in red saved the boy dressed in blue.

Perhaps it's his lonely nature or his caring one? It matters not, for this little girl is just as alone as him.

His heart went out to the girl in red, and his protective nature flared. Attached he became but his actions clumsy and unsure, for this is the first time he ever cared for someone who relied on his protection alone.

He startles and jumps, falling over his feet in fear and forcing his screams under bitten lips. His

protection is flimsy and fragile. He has no strength nor power to truly banish all the horrors they've encountered, but he tries.

He can only guide her and hold her hand. He knows that his protection amounts to nothing, but all those glances to his side tell him something different. She is shaken and stiff. Her steps, while purposeful at times, still quiver at the slighted of sounds. He notices the stolen looks she gives him, the small reassurance that he is still there and not gone.

This blue rose may think himself useless, but she does not.

So he protects as best as he can. He will try and try only for the red rose. He is the guard behind her back and the hand that holds onto her own. This little rose's life will weigh over his own, he thought, as he gently carries the fainted rose to a room that was the closes thing to 'safe'.

And he stays, stays when she recovers from a nightmare, when she silently eats the lemon candy he offers, and when he rejects her apologies, knowing now that neither of them has a say in the dangers they have to run from.

So he offers her his words and his hand because that is all he can give.

A blue rose, the unattainable who yearns for the impossible.

+

A plastic white rose, a lonely canvas.

The lonely canvas is a beautiful specter who pines and dreams of what is beyond imagination. Brown oak that was once polished is now covered in dust. Light gray walls and nothing beyond. A girl in a garden of roses, and those roses her only company.

Lovely sweet girl with bright yellow hair. She plucked a rose yellow just like her and sniffed the crinkled plastic.

It wasn't real, just a mirage of what was beyond imagination.

But not forever, not impossible. For this canvas girl knows of a way to escape the halls that became her forever home.

So she smiles and runs into the pair of flowers. A red rose girl and a blue rose man. She knows not much about what a man should be, but her mind knows what a girl like her likes. She decides then and there that she will keep the girl as a friend but will let the man be her sacrifice for her own life outside these oils and acrylics.

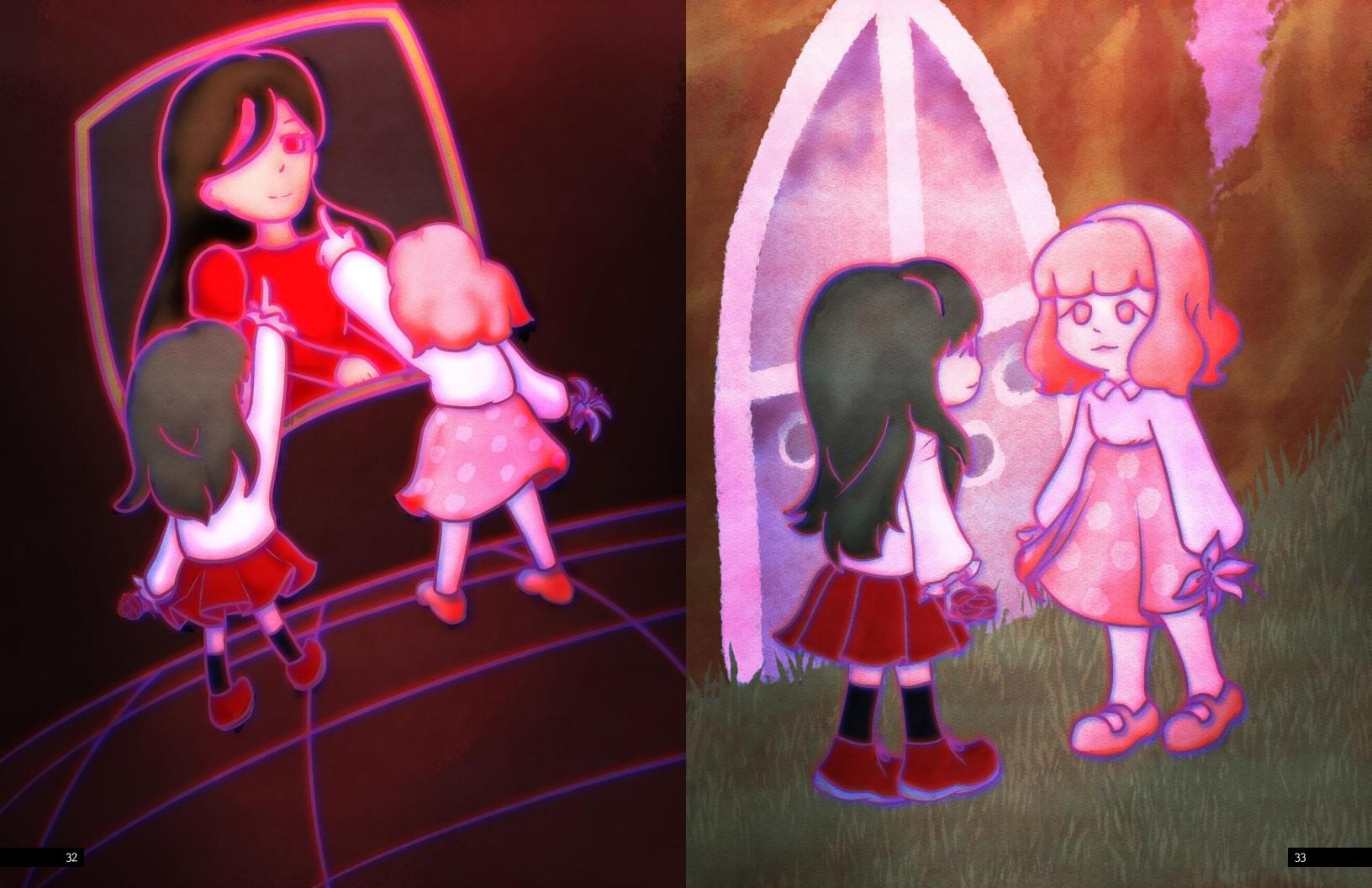
A red rose is lovely, she remembers, brave and passionate. A blue rose is mysterious, sad as well as lonely.

She does not need another sad soul to become attached to her red rose.

Thus she tries to separate them, ridicule the blue rose, and makes a grab for her red rose. Yet it does not end the way she hoped, as the red rose still chose the blue rose.

She is angered, yes, but it matters not. For as long as she can get rid of the blue rose, the red rose will be with her forever.

A yellow rose, welcomed back by the friends she imagined she had.





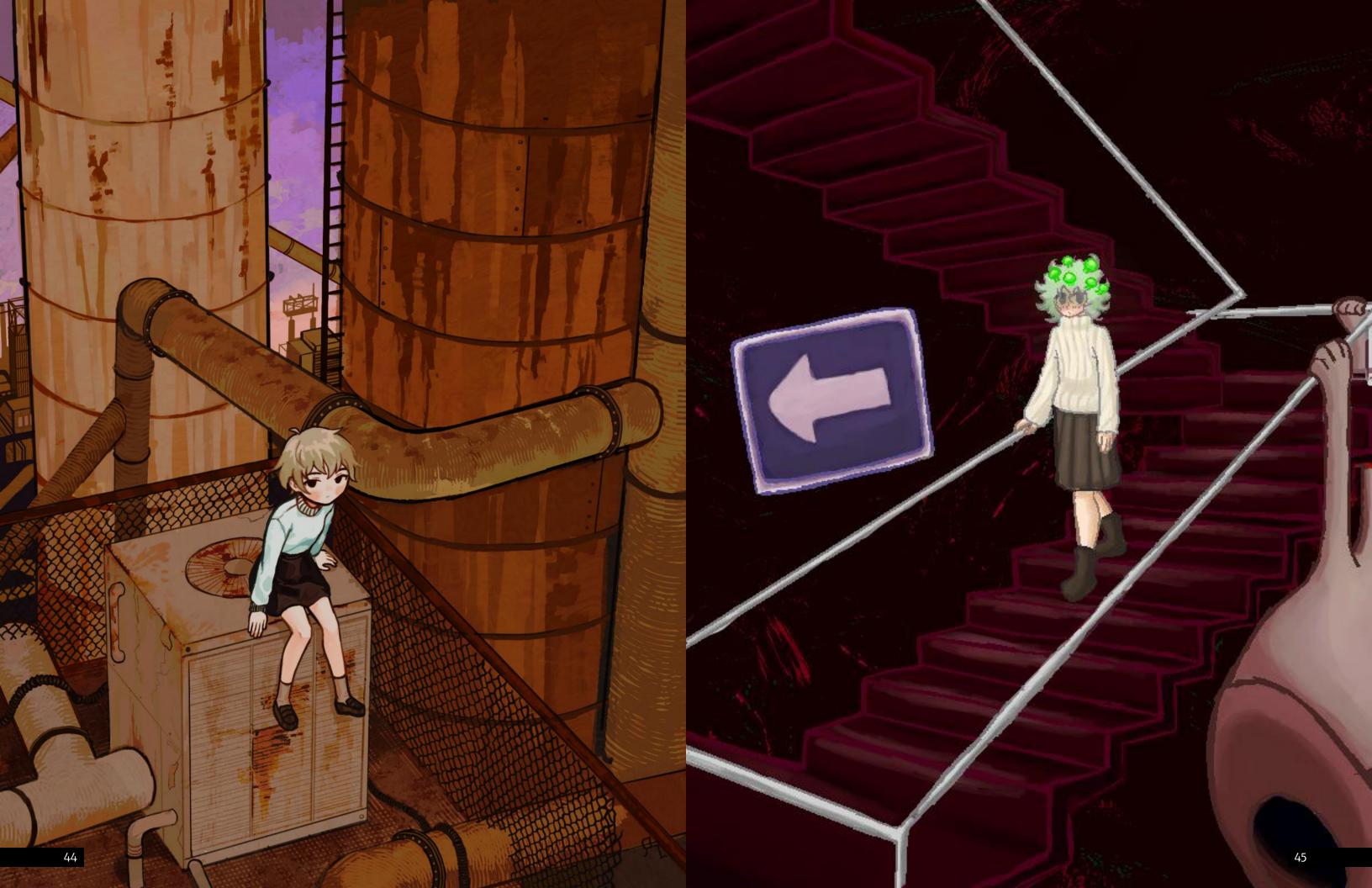
















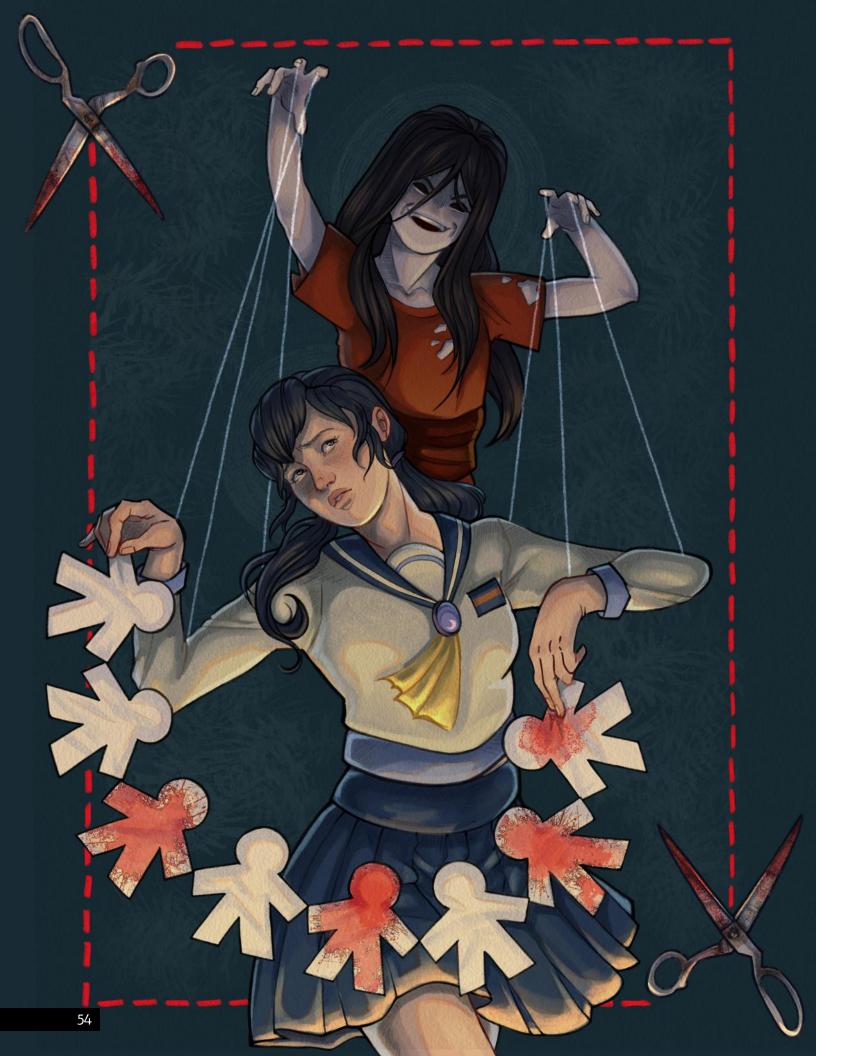
## ---WARNING---

The following submissions are from games rated 18+ or M (Mature).

While some of these submissions do not contain 18+ or M rated content, the games shown may be unsuitable for children under 17. Titles under this category may contain intense violence, blood and gore, sexual content, and/or strong language.

Consumer discretion is advised.





# \*\*\*\* Flesh, Blood, & Concrete \*\*\*\*\*

by Sepultusflos

Tudum, tudum; I think i can hear a brief sound, a sweet melody; The walls are thin, the walls are you.

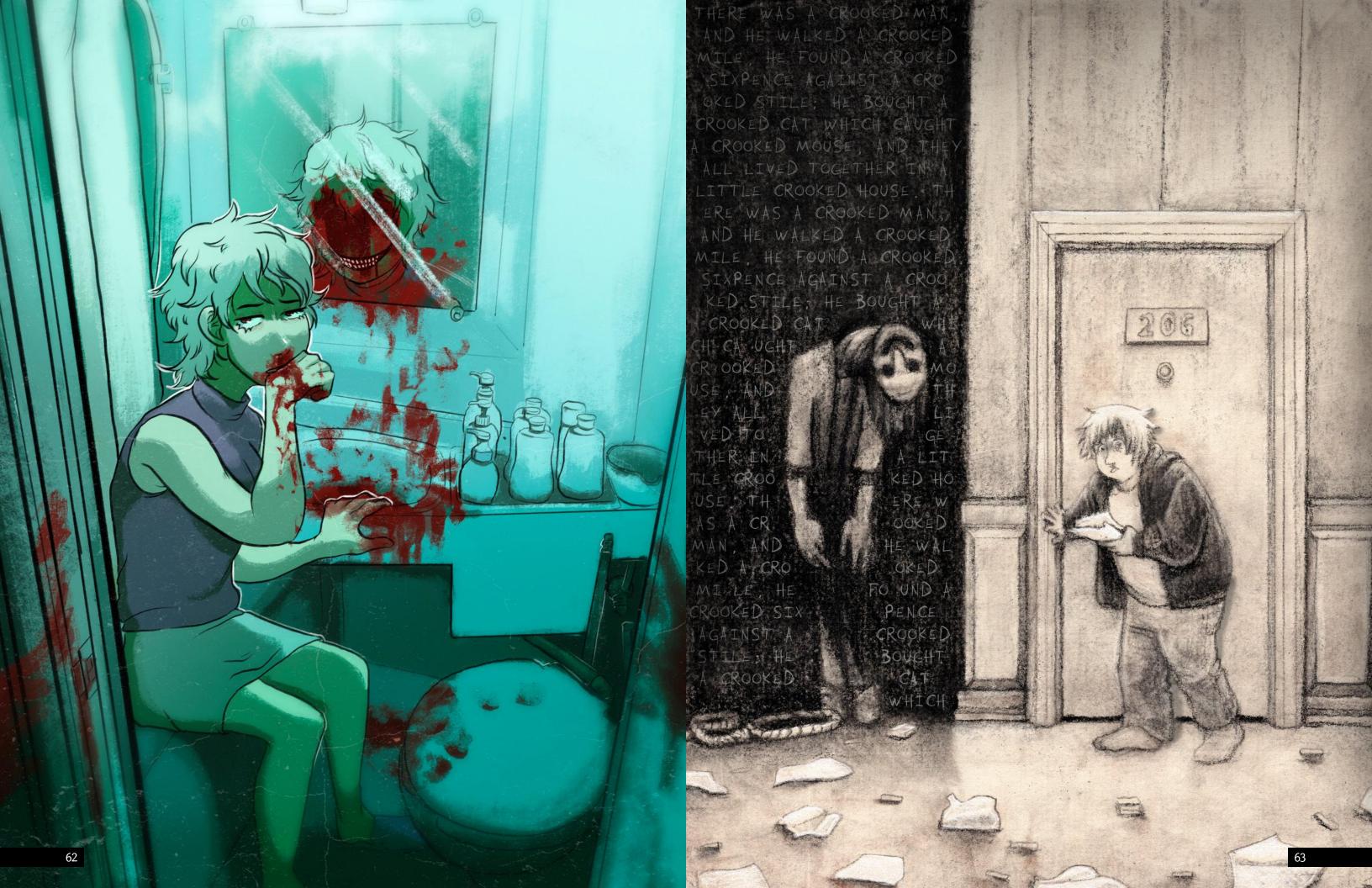
On that cold day
I saw a figure standing;
That glance became special to me;
To know you, to talk to you;
I wish these moments never ended.

My family is always changing; But when i look at it, I see your comforting face; You are here, with me.











### Angels of Death

## Stubborn Meets Persistent

by Apple & Butterfly

The house is clearly abandoned. One look at the sky and...

"It's going to rain soon, I think... Let's go inside for the night." If someone else is in there, well they'll be killed by the pair to make room for them. It's their fault for getting in their way.

"I liked that hiding place before." They had easy access to the stores and Rachel in disguise could go around them near closing time asking for scraps. There was always one person who would give her a bag due to her appearance.

"Hah? You'll survive. Come on, brat," Zack starts walking towards the house, grass crunching like fallen leaves.

The door sways a little on its hinges, squeaking in a truly annoying way. Zack readjusts his grip on his scythe just before he kicks the door open. He enters, then steps to the side to let Ray come in.

It's a large room, with a kitchen on one side and a living room on the other. Spacious. Actually. It barely looks abandoned. Everything looks clean, without any dust. The couch is still soft to the touch. Almost new. The kitchen also looks like it gets a regular cleaning.

He doesn't find anyone. Bet they're upstairs. Fuuunn!

"This isn't right..."

She walks off and heads to where she can hear Zack.

"I think we should find a different hiding place for the night. This isn't right."

"The fuck you talking about? There's a storm out. We ain't getting sick for nothing."

Zack kicks open the last door in the hallway and pauses when he sees that he sent something sliding across the floor.

...It's bone. Or at least Zack thinks it is but he's pretty freaking sure that it's a human bone.

He's about to say something more but he pauses when he feels a breath on the shell of his ear.

"What the fuck was that?! SHOW YOURSELF!" Zack yells, his scythe is at the ready in his hands. He stays a moment like that, breathing as he looks at the area in suspicion,

"... I think we should go, Zack."

Zack narrows his eyes but he nods and begins walking towards the door they entered from. Drugs or a ghost?

They make it back to the back door of the house. It's closed again, which Zack doesn't pay any mind to, he didn't kick it off the hinges so whatever.

He kicks it again and it doesn't budge.

"If I want something to be broken," Zack begins harshly with a smile before he yells, "THEN IT BET-TER FUCKING STAY BROKEN!"

The glass shatters under the force of his scythe.

Before pulling itself back together, as if each shard held by string. It reforms the window nearly perfectly.

.... That wasn't an illusion. That was real, wasn't it? IT HAD TO BE the HALLUCINOGENICS THEY WERE UNDER. Wait, how did she get out of the past before?

"Zack, can you show me the sharp side of your scythe?"

She slices her finger easily with the scythe and waits a minute. Maybe two. Maybe three.

"It's a ghost."

Immediately after saying that, something is thrown at them.

Zack uses the handle and the flat end of his scythe to push Ray out of the way. The vase lands between them, shattering.

He reaches over and pulls ray closer to the window so that they can leave.

Zack stalks up to another window and hits it. It does not shatter. Well, what the fuck.

Rachel is actually unsure what to do now. What normally scares away a ghost?

She could pray but that could anger them more.

Zack speaks at a much lower volume than before, "I'll search upstairs."

Then, true to his word, he heads back into the hallway towards the stairs.

She watches him go upstairs before she makes the search downstairs. She searches high and low. avoiding the poltergeist until she realizes the attacks stopped at some point.

She decides to check on Zack upstairs.

As she reaches the last step, she hears Zack.

She finishes her ascent to see him standing in the hallway.

"Found something, but it wasn't a cross or whatever."

"...What did you find?"

"I dunno. A board? With letters? And a little wood thing that moved around on its own." Zack shrugs,

"...That's a ouija board."

"The fuck's a ouija board?" Zack asks then watches Ray with his eyebrows raised. .

What to do now... they didn't find a cross like Ray had wanted. A drawer opens in the kitchen and Zack steps back into a room to avoid the steak knives that began to fly.

Without a word, he readjusts his hold on his scythe and begins dragging the blade across the wallpaper, ruining it.

Rachel opens her eyes when she hears a scream from the ghost. It sounded blood curdling. She watches as Zack continues to ruin the wallpaper and she starts to wonder if praying will actually work.

"Zack, let's ruin everything in this house."

"NO!"

Both of the humans look in the direction of where that came from and they see a transparent adult appear. They have a knife jutting out of their chest and Rachel thinks to herself of how they look like to be the person in that picture frame.

"We won't if you let us go now~" Zack threatens with a grin.

The ghost appears to be trying to think of another way for this to work in their favor, anything really but these two are so strange! They weren't scared of the ghost!

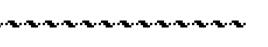
With a curse from the ghost, the door can be heard unlocking.

"There! Now get out of my house!"

Zack cackles as he walks back towards the front door.

"That went well!" Zack cackles as they exit the house, paying no mind to the seething spirit.





Omori

by RainybyDay

Every day, I stay in this room, afraid of the outside, of what they will do and what they say.

I contain myself here so I will not be reminded (You killed her didn't you) of that faithful day.

I am sorry (It's all your fault) for what I have done. (That she is dead)

Perhaps there will be a doorway to a long-forgotten home, where a bright new stage awaits with a spotlight for you and I.

She would have loved it, but no. For I am a sinner, a killer and a-(brother)

It's always dark here in this room of mine. I'm afraid to live, to stand where you fell.

Every day, I stay in this room (Every day you stand by the door) afraid of the outside. (Afraid of the stairs outside) of what they will do (Of what you will do) and what I will say)

I close my eyes to sleep And think only of a single open eye. The everlasting image of your memory, the ruin body of my Mari





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8:11	60
.flow	
Alicemare	
Angels of Death	
	65
Ao Oni	68
Aria's Story	43
Aveyond	
Aveyond 3	
Cat in the Box	
Cohabitation	
Corpse Party	54
Dreaming Mary	32
	33
Dolchio	4
ENDROLL	42
Escaped Chasm	7
Faust's Alptraum	12
Flesh, Blood, & Concrete	55 56
Gokuto Jihen	
Grimm's Hollow	
Ha10PE	
Hansel	21
Hello Charlotte	
Hylics	

Ib	
	28 29
	30
	31
LUNA	10
Mad Father	
Mermaid Swamp	57
Mothlight	53
OFF	21
OFF	38
	39
Omori	
Paper Angel	
Red Trees	3
Space Funeral	26
The Crooked Man	63
The Forest of Drizzling Rain	70
The Witch's House	11
Ultra Violet	47
Weird and Unfortunate Things Are Happening	
Witch's Heart	22
Withers	44
	45
Your Turn to Die	52
Yume 2kki	1.6
Yume Nikki	
	16
	1/